

Town of



AMHERST

Massachusetts

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SELECT BOARD
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October 22, 2009

His Excellency Deval Patrick
Governor of the Commonwealth
State House, Boston

Dear Governor Patrick:

The Select Board of Amherst is looking at a very bleak budget for FY11, with current projections of a \$4 million gap between revenue and expenses. We cut 68 positions for FY10: 55 from the schools and 13 from Town services. These were on top of previous years' cuts, and with no "fat" remaining, we are now cutting into "bone."

The Select Board, therefore, urges you to make the following reforms. These will not be sufficient to close the gap, but they would help.

We support closing the telecommunications personal property tax loophole on equipment. The telephone industry has had a free ride with this exemption for far too long and the revenue is sorely needed.

We support fixing charter school funding so that local schools will not continue to have resources drained to pay tuition for charter schools. A moratorium on new charter schools and on expansion of existing ones would allow a more equitable solution to be worked out. Minimally, a circuit-breaker is needed so that the percentage of Chapter 70 funds that towns lose now for charter schools will not increase.

We also support legislation to extend pension funding schedules by 10 years to 2040. This request has become extremely important given the unusually deep recession and the high and unaffordable assessments that our citizens would have to pay to maintain the current schedule.

Thank you for your attention to these matters. We appreciate your leadership and your work on behalf of the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

Stephanie J. O'Keeffe
Chair, Amherst Select Board.

Cc: Senator Stan Rosenberg
Representative Ellen Story

